

# Educators Excellence

**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

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## **EDUCATORS 4 EXCELLENCE – NEW YORK HOSTS ‘NONE OF THE ABOVE’ PANEL ON TESTING AND ASSESSMENT**

*Teachers, Joined by Other Experts and Academics, Discuss Need for Changes to Standardized Testing in New York City and New York State*

**October 1, 2014 (New York)** — Educators 4 Excellence-New York, a teacher-led organization that seeks to elevate the voices of teachers in policy discussions, held an event today on the ongoing debate about the scope and role of testing in determining student performance. The event came after a group of working classroom teachers, the **E4E-NY 2014 Teacher Policy Team**, [released a paper](#) on changes to New York City and New York State’s assessment structures.

The event featured a discussion on the role and future of testing from: **Jonah Rockoff**, Associate Professor, Columbia University and co-author of a [study](#) on the long-term effects of teachers; **Dana Goldstein**, education journalist and author of *The Teacher Wars*; **Emily Davis**, Teacher Ambassador Fellow at US Department of Education and middle school Spanish teacher; and **Suraj Gopal**, special education teacher, Hudson High School (Manhattan), E4E Policy Team Member and UFT Delegate.

“As a teacher I’ve seen both good and bad uses of standardized tests,” Gopal said. “We need the data and accountability that tests bring, and policymakers should enact the proposals in our paper, bringing clarity and focus to our tests and the culture that surrounds them.”

This teacher developed report on testing and assessment calls for changes to:

- **Design: Improve the accuracy of standardized assessments.** Computer-adaptive testing and an iterative design process involving teachers would end the focus on “teaching to the test,” contributing instead to meaningful learning.
- **Culture: Create and maintain a positive testing environment in schools.** A negative culture surrounding standardized testing too often exists, undermining the value of assessments and harming teacher morale and student motivation. Policymakers must address the negative impact of excessive testing, and increase the focus on alternate assessments.
- **Teaching: Use data to improve instruction.** Timely, disaggregated, accessible testing data can serve as an important tool for teachers, parents, and administrators. Ongoing professional development on using data to tailor instruction would give teachers the support they need.
- **Accountability: Include data in critical decisions.** Tests should never be the sole basis for any high-stakes decision, but must be a part of a multi-measure accountability framework. Teachers and students should be evaluated by multiple metrics and with multiple years of evidence. For instance, the system for high school graduation should be restructured to ensure that no student is denied a high school diploma based on a single exam.

“From the point of view of my research, we can say that these standardized measures, which have their limitations, can still be used to look at student growth over time,” Professor Rockoff said. “The caveat is, we don’t exactly what it is that’s being measured on the test. Is it student knowledge, or some other measure of performance?”

“The bottom line is that we need to have an honest conversation about what’s going on with the culture of testing,” said Davis, continuing, “teachers are losing 30, 40, sometimes 50 days of their instruction time to testing prep, and we need to find a balance...this change needs to be led by school leaders.”

Goldstein added, “Achievement testing, which we’ve had since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, is really a step forward not to blame kids for their low test scores, but to put the responsibility on adults to make sure that children are learning. So I think it’s important to acknowledge how far we’ve come...but sometimes, when the drive to test is driven by a desire to evaluate adults, we end up with tests that are not very good.”

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“The work these teachers did over the past several months confirms the need to change the culture of testing,” E4E-NY Executive Director Jonathan Schleifer added. “As the teachers wrote, there are many ways good assessments can inform and improve education in our City. Just today Chancellor Fariña introduced the new school quality snapshots that include assessment data, among the more qualitative metrics. This is the sort of balanced approach that are teachers have called for.”

The full report can be viewed at [educators4excellence.org/nytesting](http://educators4excellence.org/nytesting).

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For far too long, education policy has been created without a critical voice at the table – the voice of classroom teachers.

**Educators 4 Excellence (E4E)**, a teacher-led organization, is changing this dynamic by placing the voices of teachers at the forefront of the conversations that shape our classrooms and careers. E4E has a quickly growing national network of educators united by our Declaration of Teachers’ Principles and beliefs. E4E members can learn about education policy and research, network with like-minded peers and policymakers and take action by advocating for teacher-created policies that lift student achievement and the teaching profession.

For more information, please visit [www.educators4excellence.org](http://www.educators4excellence.org).